



PALM Expert

Palm's Treo smartphone is pretty clever from the moment you first switch it on, but Julian Prokaza finds it becomes a certified genius with the addition of a few free or inexpensive utilities



PALMSOURCE SOLD

Access Ltd, a Tokyo-based company that develops mobile phone software, has acquired Palm OS developer PalmSource for \$324.3 million (around £183.7m).

Given that Palm OS 5 Garnet is reaching the end of its useful life and the 18-month-old Palm OS 6 Cobalt has yet to appear in a commercially available device, just what Access is getting for its money isn't clear. Fortunately for Palm (formerly palmOne), Access isn't getting the Palm brand as palmOne bought that from PalmSource earlier this year.

PalmSource is also working on a Linux-based version of Palm OS 6, having acquired Chinese mobile phone software company China MobileSoft. Access paid a significant premium for PalmSource (its \$324.3 cash payment is roughly 83 per cent more than PalmSource's stock market value), which suggests the company was very keen to get its hands on an alternative smartphone operating system to Symbian and Windows Mobile.

What the Access acquisition means for Palm remains to be seen, but there probably won't be any immediate changes as Palm's licence for Palm OS runs to 2010. Palm president Ed Colligan said: "Access is currently a software technology partner and we look forward to continuing our strong working relationship to advance the Palm OS platform."

NEW PALM DESKTOP SOFTWARE

Palm has released updates to both the Windows and Mac versions of its Palm Desktop application. Palm Desktop 4.1.4E for Windows streamlines the installation process for users upgrading from a previous Palm OS handheld and is compatible with the Treo 650, LifeDrive, Tungsten T3, T5, E and E2 and the Zire 31, 71 and 72. It's not for Treo 600 PocketMirror Standard conduit users, though, as it installs Outlook conduits designed for handhelds that use the extended PIM applications.

Palm Desktop 4.2.1 Rev C for Mac adds better support for Mac OS 10.4 (Tiger) and fixes a permission issue that can cause problems with iSync. It also adds support for handhelds not included in version 4.2.1 Rev A.

Palm's overall share of the handheld market may be slipping, but sales of its Treo smartphones are on the increase. The Treo 600 and 650 are extremely well-designed devices that do pretty much everything you want straight from the box, but that hasn't stopped programmers producing all kinds of tweaks that enhance their usefulness still further. Here's our pick of free and shareware programs that really help the Treo come into its own. If you know of any others, let us know by emailing palm@computershopper.co.uk.

CONTACT

PALM EXPERT

If there is anything you would like to see covered in *Palm Expert*, please contact us at the address below

palm@computershopper.co.uk

REVIEW MEMORY CARD ALERT

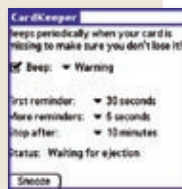
BYTESWAPPED.COM CardKeeper

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE Free

DETAILS www.byteswapped.com/palm

Unless you keep your Treo in a case, the SD Card can pop out when the phone is in a bag or pocket. This utility keeps an eye on an inserted memory card and displays an alert if it's ejected. The idea is that the sooner you know the card is missing, the more likely you are to find it – and if you take the card out to use somewhere else, you're unlikely to leave it behind.



REVIEW TYPING TOOL

DANIEL GROBE SACHS KeyCaps600

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE Free

DETAILS <http://shrug.csl.uiuc.edu/~sachs/palm>

The Treo keyboard is a marvel of miniaturisation, but typing capital letters requires manual dexterity. KeyCaps600 speeds the process up a bit as it enables you to type capital letters by pressing and holding a key for a moment, and shifted characters by pressing a key twice.

REVIEW PROGRAM LAUNCHER

PORTABLE PROJECTS 123-Launch

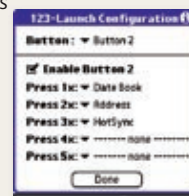
RATING ★★★★★

PRICE \$4.95 (around £3)

DETAILS www.portableprojects.com

SUPPLIER www.palmgear.com

Launching programs on a Treo without using the stylus is simple enough, but it involves a lot of button pressing. 123-Launch provides a handy short cut: it maps up to five applications to each of the four hardware application launch buttons. Pressing a button once launches the first application, pressing it twice launches the second and so on. An onscreen prompt helps you remember how many times to press. You can set up each button individually so 123-Launch doesn't interfere with those programs that use multiple button presses to cycle between different views.



REVIEW SMARTPHONE UTILITY

MANTRA GROUP CallShield Pro

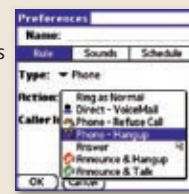
RATING ★★★★★

PRICE \$25 (around £14)

DETAILS www.mantragroup.com/callshield.htm

SUPPLIER <http://palmloyal.palmgear.com>

Palm stopped just short of making the Treo a true 'smart' phone, leaving third-party developers to add all the facilities such devices can offer. CallShield Pro provides a long list of handy tools, including MP3 ringtones, auto answer and SMS pop-up blocking, but what really makes it worth the money is its extensive set of call-handling rules. These let you block calls from certain numbers, companies or categories, send them straight to voicemail without ringing the phone and even block SMS spam based on the originating number or text contained in the message. You can even set rules that work according to a schedule, which means you can turn off those annoying ringtones while you're at work and have them return automatically when you're at home.





REVIEW HOTSYNC UTILITY

GOTREOSOFTWARE.COM CradleCare

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE \$8.50 (around £5)

DETAILS www.gotreoftware.comSUPPLIER <http://mytreo.net>

CradleCare is another multifunction utility, but it's one of our favourite applications because of the features it provides when a Treo is connected to a PC. If you often forget to synchronise your Treo, CradleCare can automatically trigger a HotSync as soon as a PC connection is made or according to a schedule.

Incoming calls can be forwarded to another number when the Treo is plugged into a PC or charging, so you can pick up calls on your landline when somebody rings rather than wrestling with cables.



REVIEW CONTROL UTILITY

MILAN VOTAVA TreoGuard

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE \$9 (around £5)

SUPPLIER www.geakware.com/treoguard

The Treo has a set of preferences that configure how the screen and keyboard behave during and between calls, but TreoGuard adds a far greater level of control. Its full list of features is rather lengthy, but it includes options to turn off the screen during a call to preserve battery life, lock the volume controls to prevent accidental adjustment and set hard button short cuts to access key functions without turning the screen on. As the phone's power is controlled independently from the handheld's, TreoGuard's option to power the phone on and off according to a schedule is also very handy.

REVIEW PROFILE MANAGER

MILAN VOTAVA Profiles 1.01

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE Free

SUPPLIER www.palmgear.com

Mobile phones have supported profiles for ages, but they're missing from the Treo. No prizes for guessing what Profiles is for, then, although you'll be surprised at just how much this free program can do. You can create any number of custom profiles, and it has options to dim the screen, keep the keyboard backlight on, disable ringtones, lock the keyboard, change the colour scheme and much more besides.

Better still, you can turn profiles on and off according to a schedule or even when the Treo is charging, and a pop-up message tells you which profile is active when you switch the Treo on. Just be sure to grab Profiles before the developer comes to his senses and starts charging for it.

REVIEW VOLUME BOOSTER

GOTREOSOFTWARE.COM VolumeCare

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE \$15 (around £8)

DETAILS www.gotreoftware.comSUPPLIER <http://mytreo.net/downloads/details-685.html?VolumeCare>

If you suffer from impaired hearing or just tend to use your Treo in noisy environments, VolumeCare may help. It boosts the volume of the Treo's speaker by up to 75 per cent, which means that you can damage both the speaker and your eardrum with careless use, but you should be able to hear callers clearly in almost any circumstances.



REVIEW TRANSPORT MAPS

VISUAL IT Tube 2 London Pro

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £32 inc VAT

DETAILS www.visualit.co.uk

Visual IT's Tube has long been a must-have program for itinerant Palm OS users. Its mainstay is the set of large, clear maps of subway networks for 36 cities worldwide, but overground and street maps are available, too.

The latest version, Tube 2, covers London, New York and Paris (other cities are on the way) and comes in three editions: London is just an Underground map; London Pro adds overground rail and street maps; and London Streets adds street maps for 50 square kilometres.

Tube 2's maps are bitmap images and while they're extremely clear on high-resolution screens, zooming out by just one step renders text illegible. This makes little difference to rail maps, but street maps are difficult to use at anything other than their default zoom setting.

When you move a map around, a whole-map thumbnail appears temporarily in the corner of the screen, but this would be more useful if it were clickable so that users could jump to any part of a map quickly. Another niggle is that each of the nine maps that cover London can be searched only for the streets it contains, so you need to know which map a street is on before you can find it.

Locations on the underground and street maps have additional information. Tap a Tube station and the zone, line, connections and access restrictions appear; tap a street and its name and postcode pop up. Both maps also list nearby places of interest but they don't link to the appropriate street map. Tube stations on both maps are linked, though, so you can jump to the corresponding station on the underground map from the street map, and vice versa.

Tube 2's route-planning is still limited to underground journeys, but the process has been streamlined. It's now much easier to choose a journey's end points and select Tube lines to avoid, but for some reason the option to avoid individual stations has been removed.

At £10, the underground-only London edition is probably the best value of the Tube 2 packages, and with its route-planning feature it's certainly the most useful. All the editions are worthy additions to any city traveller's Palm OS handheld, although each could benefit from a few tweaks.



✓ Better than a stack of maps

✗ A few features missing

No USB for me?

My PC runs Windows 98 SE. I'm not surprised that the Palm Desktop software provided with my Tungsten T5 won't run on it, but I'm disappointed that Palm doesn't provide a suitable USB driver. This would enable me to use the T5's built-in memory as an external storage device when plugged into a USB port. Palm says I could build a driver with the appropriate files from Microsoft, but I would also need the driver development kit, which costs about \$200. Even cheap USB flash drives usually come with drivers for Windows 98 SE, so it's a poor show that Palm can't be bothered to do the same. Any suggestions, please?

Philip Taylor

Software company Softick (www.softick.com) assured us that although its CardExport II program is designed to allow an SD Card on any Palm device to act as removable USB storage, it would work with built-in storage, too – and it provides the necessary Windows 98 SE driver.

Unfortunately, when Philip tried it, CardExport II refused to recognise his T5's onboard memory. So we'll throw this one open: has anyone cracked the USB problem with Windows 98 SE?

